



## **Moments of Magic and Wonder** by **nephilimgodling**

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**Summary:** Max finds peace in Eleven's arms and Eleven realizes that she never knew what love was until she kissed Max.

## Moments of Magic and Wonder

### MOMENTS OF MAGIC AND WONDER

Come on skinny love just last the year,  
Pour a little salt, we were never here.  
- *Skinny Love, Bon Iver.*

Maxine Mayfield has always felt like a wave, hitting the shore for a brief moment to leave temporary marks on the sand and then disappearing forever. The truth is that she doesn't disappear forever but she wishes she actually could. She never stays in a place long enough to call it home or leave permanent marks that would make people remember her. Maxine, Max as she prefers to be called, longs to be remembered. This is a silent thought in her mind that always comes on goes but never stays long enough for her to dwell on it, just like her very existence.

So when she moves to Hawkins with her asshole stepbrother, she doesn't expect it to be any different. It never is and she has stopped wanting it to be a long time ago. When four boys start stalking her during the breaks and they try to make a conversation with her, she doesn't think about it much. She wants to be left alone, or at least she has convinced herself that she wants just that. "Max, hey!" One of the four boys, Lucas she recalls, follows her to her locker. She rolls her eyes. Max might not be the busiest girl in town but she definitely doesn't have the time for this. "I... We... Well, we thought it would be good... great... if you hang out with us after school. I mean, great, for you. You know, since you don't have friends. But it's okay-"

"Still so presumptuous, aren't you, stalker?" There is a playful side to the way she tilts her head and averts her eyes from the black boy standing in front of her. His cheeks look a bit redder than they used to and the seemingly-permanent smile on his face has disappeared. Max likes that she has this effect on people. She doesn't want them to get too close to her and being mean and sarcastic usually does the trick.

"Hey, I just want to help you get more... involved. Everyone wants to hang out with the AV club by the way, just saying." That surely isn't

true and even Max who has only been in this school for two weeks knows it. "We will go to Mike's house and his mom makes the most delicious meals ever. You ain't ever had those meals in California, I bet." California. She misses the big city she used to live in. (She misses the smell of the sea and the sound of the people walking in the streets at night. But she doesn't miss California enough to have tears well in her eyes. Max doesn't cry, ever.)

Max slams her locker shut and sighs loud enough for the boy to hear her. "Fine," she says, her voice still persistent but Lucas realizes that she has somewhat given in. (He doesn't know why though. Is she really as lonely as his friends think she is? Or does she just enjoy the thought of a good meal? Max is still a mystery, a puzzle that Lucas has yet to solve. But he is determined. He has all the time in the world.) "I'll meet you guys after school but don't take this as a friendly gesture. We're still not friends, get it?" The smile on Lucas's face gets bigger and he nods. Max doesn't think that he gets it, really. Boys never seem to get Max.

The truth is, as a wave that hit the shore every once in a while, Max has never cared about relationships or even affection. Sure, she wants someone to be by her side when she is silently crying herself to sleep and when her lungs ache so deeply that she can't breathe; but she has never wanted a boyfriend. Maybe it was because she never had friends that drooled over cute boys who were just assholes or a relationship that she could look up to. In all honesty, boys have never caught her attention. Sometimes she pretends to look at a boy and see him as charming or at least above average but it feels too forced. ("Steve," she thought the first or second day she came to this school. He was a senior and his hair was ridiculous but that still made him look a bit better than okay. "Steve is good." He seemed like the type of guy girls like her would crush on. He was tall, fit, a senior and hung out with the cool kids. He was a cool kid. Max forgot to pay attention to him after the fourth day and didn't feel the butterflies when she saw him again.)

Max is not the busiest student in Hawkins Middle School, but she clearly doesn't have the time to think about boys or why she doesn't feel something strong towards them. Maybe it just hasn't happened yet. (She tries not to think about the fact that her mom fell for her

dad when she was nearly her age and got married the day she turned eighteen.) She walks to her next class with books held tightly in her hand and she briefly wonders if the marks she leaves in this hallway will ever be permanent.

"I don't get why you invited her!" Mike is yelling from downstairs. Dustin (Or was his name something else? Max isn't good with names.) is telling him to keep quiet because she has ears and goddamnit, she can hear him. Dustin and Lucas seem to care about her but Mike hates her. And Will? He just doesn't care at all. (Max has spent some time observing him during class and he is too silent, too thoughtful. She hears other students calling him Zombie Boy because he was missing for a week and then suddenly came back but she can't help thinking that there might be something... else.) "I don't care if she hears! What happened to this party being democratic? You should have asked me first, Lucas." He isn't exactly wrong, Max is aware that she came out of the blue.

Then their voices become even higher and Max hears Lucas yelling "No one said a goddamn word when you invited Eleven to our party!" She has heard the name before. ("Eleven?" she had scoffed, "who names their kid Eleven? That is basically child abuse." Now she thinks that maybe Eleven isn't an actual name but a codename, an alias.) Max doesn't want them to argue because of her because she doesn't really want to join their stupid little group anyway. So just as she is about to go downstairs to tell them that she is going to leave, Dustin rushes up with a toothy grin on his face. "Sorry Max," he stutters. Max has realized that he is generally shy but still somehow as talkative as daring Lucas. "It took a bit longer than we... Originally planned."

Max shrugs, she has all the time in the world. (Only because she doesn't want to go back home and have to see his stupid stepbrother's ugly face.) "I can leave if your AV Club voted against me hanging out with you tonight." The sarcasm in her voice is more than evident but Dustin shakes his head fervently.

"No, no," he bursts out, "you don't have to leave." He coughs, probably reminding himself that he should stay cool and that girls don't like boys who act too childish. (Not that Max would be interested in him anyway. And that has nothing to do with his curly

hair or his old cap or his weird teeth. She is starting to think that Dustin is a nice guy, really. Too vivacious for her taste, but she might try to stand it.) "The Club has voted for you to stay, actually." Sure you did, she says to herself. She nods like she didn't hear Mike yelling about wanting her to live just minutes before. It's okay, really, she doesn't care if people want her around or not. For a fact, even her parents don't want her around and she has gotten used to it.

Fourteen years of not being loved or wanted around, just so she won't care when a stupid little boy wants her gone.

She is sitting next to Mike on the benches, they will be headed home in a matter of minutes. "I know that you hate me," she says when Mike tries to inch away from her. It doesn't hurt her the slightest. She actually enjoys it a little bit when people want to stay away from her but she has been spending too much time with Mike's friends and she doesn't want them to argue everytime that she hangs out with them.

"I don't hate you," Mike scoffs. Max rolls her eyes so hard she thinks she might have pulled a muscle. "It's just that... Lucas and Dustin are trying too hard to fill the space in our club and that just... Can't be filled by anyone else but-"

"Eleven, right?" Max completes his sentence with enthusiasm. (For some reason that she hasn't quite understood yet, she wants to talk about Eleven. She wants to know who that mysterious girl is.) "Your... Girlfriend?" It is a strong word, girlfriend.

Mike flinches but he doesn't deny it. "El, she was great. Extraordinary. We all loved her." We don't love you, he is trying to say, at least I don't. Max doesn't need him to tell it with words, she can understand it. "She helped us save... She helped us find Will." Mike looks like he is aching to talk more about Eleven but he barely wills to stop himself. He probably thinks that Max isn't the right person to talk about Eleven. He isn't exactly wrong, Max doesn't understand what is so great about this Eleven girl, but she wouldn't mind finding out.

"Will she come back?"

"I don't know," Mike replies, sighing. "I hope so."

There is a hidden probably not and I really want her to in his voice. He looks down and starts playing with his fingers, his cheeks turning red at the thought of Eleven. Girlfriend might be a strong word but Max believes it is weaker than the feelings Mike has towards her. (Also, she recognizes his tone when he talks about her coming back. It sounds too familiar.

"Will we ever come back to this place, Mom?"

"I don't know darling, I hope we do.") (They never did. France was a great place but they didn't belong there. Max didn't speak French fluently and she didn't look French either.)

When Max finally meets Eleven, she can't believe that she is real. It wouldn't be right to say that she meets Eleven because well, just like her boyfriend, Eleven seems to hate Max. It's okay, really. Max doesn't care. Especially because this is the first time she actually saw Eleven and they aren't even friends yet. Her hair is short and laid back, she wears all black and looks like a goth with the dark makeup on her pretty face. Yes, that's right. Even though there is blood dripping from her nose and she refuses to shake Max's hand, Eleven has a pretty face and Max can't deny the fact that she stared at her face for at least a minute. She has pretty brown eyes (she hasn't realized that brown eyes could be that pretty) and her pale skin looks soft, the opposite of her stance.

She introduces herself but Eleven doesn't even look at her for longer than two seconds. This feels worse than when Mike wanted her to leave. There is something heartwrenching about being disliked by the girl that everyone liked. But of course, Max will never admit it. She doesn't care, she doesn't care at all. "That girl, Eleven, she is really nice," she says after it is all over. Will shrugs, he doesn't know that much about Eleven, mostly because he met her only three days ago anyway. But he knows that she played a big part in saving him and he is more than grateful. "She never seems to be around though."

"That's just the way she is, I guess," Will says softly, almost like a whisper. He is the quietest out of all the guys she met this year. It is probably because of the experiences he had during being lost, or in the Upside Down. (When Lucas first told him the story of what happened to Will and how they saved him, Max didn't believe her.

Boys would say anything to impress tough girls like Max, that was a fact. But when she saw that Demogorgon dog... Demodog... She believed them. And when she saw Eleven using her powers, she found herself being drawn into this story.)

"I guess," Max replies. She doesn't know what to say.

For a brief moment, she realizes that this is what girls in the movies feel when they see a cute boy across the hallway and almost fall for him. The thought is too bizarre, almost like blasphemy for her because she lived with parents who considered everything different as wrong and abnormal. And this was most definitely different. She tried thinking about Lucas or Dustin or Steve, anyone who had a Y chromosome instead of the second X. (It didn't work. Lucas's dark skin turned into Eleven's pale face, Dustin's pearly teeth became Eleven's bleeding nose and Steve's hair was replaced with Eleven's smooth yet still harsh voice.)

"Why are you here?"

Max is startled at the sound of the girl's voice, it is somewhat smaller and weaker when she first heard it. Eleven doesn't look angry or mean but scared. "I go here," she shrugs. Pretty girls might make her do weird things but they can't stop from skating in the yard of her own school. "Why are you here?" She doesn't mean to sound rude but the girl almost takes a step back. "I mean, I never see you around."

"I shouldn't be around," Eleven says. Max wonders why. Is it because she has amazing powers that could kill everyone in this school in the blink of an eye? Or is it because she was an experiment in a laboratory and probably doesn't have actual parents? "Why are you here?" She repeats. Max fights the urge to roll her eyes when she sees the look in Eleven's eyes. She seems afraid, afraid of what?

"I told you, I go here."

"No. Why are you with Mike?"

"Do you see him next to me right now? Because I don't." Mike and Eleven. Eleven and Mike. The only time she sees Eleven at the school or anywhere else, she is with Mike. They seem to be dating and they



are the only couple Max has seen around so far. "Mike hates me and I can't tell that I enjoy his friendship a lot, so you don't have to be jealous." She sounds angrier than she intended and Eleven realizes it.

She tilts her head in confusion. "Jealous?" Eleven thinks about the meaning of the word. Feeling or showing an envious resentment of someone or their achievements or possessions. She has this bond (Do normal kids her age call it a relationship?) with Mike and she doesn't want Mike to share this bond with anyone else, yes. But there is another reason that she doesn't want to see Max around. Whenever she catches a glimpse of her red hair and blue eyes, Eleven feels taken aback. Her breath gets caught in her throat and weird worms move in her stomach. She tries to digest those worms everytime she sees Max but there is something pretty about her. Pretty and beautiful. (She remembers Mike saying those words to her when she put on a blonde wig. Max's hair is far more beautiful than that. She is prettier and more beautiful. And no, she is not jealous of her skating abilities or her charm. She enjoys her presence to the point where it makes her almost sick.) "I am not jealous."

Max stops skating and stares at the confused, thoughtful girl in front of her. "Good, because you have no reason to be." Eleven knows that she is right. She has no reason to be jealous. Mike likes spending time with her and she knows for a fact that he doesn't like Max. Eleven doesn't like thinking too much and in moments like this where something inside her is churning, she remembers why. When she thinks, she discovers things about herself. Things that she wouldn't necessarily want to learn. Max realizes that Eleven suddenly looks a bit out of it, so she continues talking with a softer voice. "It's okay. Normal girls feel that way sometimes."

"Do you?"

"What?" Max asks even though she understands the question just fine.

"Do you feel jealous when you see someone next to a boy you like?" A boy. Max wishes Eleven didn't specify it that way because she has never felt that way before. She wants to say that, well, girls can like whoever they like and be jealous of whoever they want but she can't. Because even though Eleven is clearly different than others in many ways, she probably has all those judgemental thoughts carved into

her mind. That's just how everything works. Plus, Max isn't sure of what she feels anyway. Maybe this is just a phase. Maybe she will find the right boy in a few months, or years.

So she shrugs. She doesn't want to lie to Eleven. She has never enjoyed lying to people and she doesn't do so unless she really has to.

Eleven anxiously runs a hand through her short hair. Max realizes that her hair has grown a bit since the last time she saw her, which has to be at least two weeks ago. "I don't know how to be a normal girl," she sighs. She sounds desperate and fearful. Max feels sorry for her and then feels mad at herself because Eleven deserves better than her stupid pity.

"I can show you... I mean, it isn't like I am great at being a normal girl but I think I can teach you few things." If she weren't standing right in front of this pretty girl with her hands on her hips, she would laugh at herself. Max Mayfield and teaching someone else how to be a normal girl? That sounds just way too absurd, even for her wild imagination.

Eleven looks at the girl with a skateboard tucked under her underarm. She is pretty, prettier than anyone she has ever seen until this day. (She hasn't seen too many girls but Max is definitely prettier than Nancy who was the epitome of perfection and femininity for Eleven.) And there is something about the way she rolls her eyes everytime someone annoys her and the sharp tone and sarcastic words she uses when she just wants to be alone. Eleven isn't even aware of the fact that she has been clearly observing Max. She doesn't want to admit that she actually enjoys watching the girl at every small chance she gets. This feels a bit odd, it is almost like watching Mike's red cheeks and curly hair during the time they spend together. But it is also different. It is like seeing Nancy across the hall and admiring how she looks so effortlessly beautiful. Max makes her feel affectionate, a word that Hopper had taught her before. "I would like that very much," she says with the ghost of a smile on her face.

Eleven doesn't like new places. So when she stands in front of the door to Max's house with a bag sprung on her shoulder, she feels nervous. In the purple small bag that Hopper has given her, there is a pair of pajamas, a toothbrush, and a walkie-talkie in case something

happens and she needs to contact Hopper. Max has told her that girls call it a sleepover and that she has never had one. Eleven also doesn't like firsts, but having her first sleepover at Max's doesn't seem that bad. In fact, she likes the sound of it.

A tall boy with long hair and a cigarette between his lips opens the door, there is a small bruise on his neck and cheek. "Your friend is here!" He yells towards the hall and Max rushes to the door just a few seconds later. She is wearing a green shirt and grey sweatpants that almost make Eleven smile. She looks adorable.

"Welcome," she says with a big grin on her face. "Excuse my brother, he just enjoys being an ass for no reason." Eleven wants to explain that he didn't even say anything but Max gestures her to follow her and walks into the house. Eleven decides to shrug it off and follows the redhead. "Billy is in the living room, doing the weird stuff he does and listening to loud rock music. Here is my room." They walk into a small room with posters and photographs all over the wall. It reminds Eleven of Nancy's room but this is way different. Max isn't as organized and her room doesn't look girly at all. Eleven likes it though, this is just so Max.

It takes them around half an hour to break the awkward silence that keeps occurring and start laughing about everything and nothing at the same time. Eleven wonders if this is how making another friend feels like. She didn't feel like this when she became close with Lucas and Dustin or even Will. This almost feels like the nights she spends at Mike's basement, blushing at the compliments he whispers and then wanting to kiss him but stopping before she actually does. The only difference is that Max doesn't compliment her and Eleven doesn't want to kiss Max.

Or does she?

Well, Max has pretty pink lips and they almost look like they are covered by a light layer of lipstick but Max seems like a fan of natural beauty. Her lips are definitely prettier than Mike's and Eleven starts wondering how it would feel like to kiss Max. Then she stops herself because she shouldn't feel that way. (To be honest, no one has said that she only has to like boys but she has never seen a girl that liked girls.) She tries to think about Mike and his freckles and his jawbone

and his hands, then she feels a bit better, a bit normal.

The rest of the night is just them laughing and talking and getting to know each other. When the clock strikes two in the morning, Max knows Eleven better than anyone else in the whole world and Eleven has all the keys to the locks Max has.

That night, Max dreams of Eleven. This is a first. She hasn't dreamed of anyone since she was eight and went on a long trip without her mother by her side. In her dream, she touches Eleven's short curls and the girl smiles as she does so. Her fingers brush Eleven's arm and then, slowly her hand. They lock their fingers and stay like that for a few moments. "Peaceful," Eleven says and Max swears that she actually heard her say it.

Max nods, the smile on her face getting bigger. "Yes. Peaceful." And indeed it is. Max hasn't realized that she was restless until she held Eleven's hand (in her dream).

When she wakes up and sees that Eleven is still sleeping, she is shocked to see that they are actually holding hands. Her cheeks are suddenly ablaze and she unwillingly pulls her hand away. Trying not to wake the girl up, she goes to the bathroom and washes her face until that stupid little smile goes away and her cheeks are as pale as they should be.

The next morning, after having a quick breakfast and changing to their actual clothes, Max goes to Hopper's house with Eleven. (Definitely not because she wants to spend some more time with the girl, only because she wants to make sure that Eleven gets home safely.) (Eleven surely isn't complaining.) "So, did you enjoy last night?" Max asks, trying not to grin too largely.

"Yeah, yeah. I did. Thank you," Eleven stops for a split second, "For making me feel like an ordinary girl for a night." Max shrugs like it is not a big deal but in all honesty, she hasn't felt like an ordinary girl for a long time either. "I am sorry for being mean to you earlier." The sudden apology is unexpected for both Max and Eleven. "I didn't realize how nice you were." People don't usually call Max nice because well, she isn't. She is rude and silent and she isn't afraid of arguing when she has to. People don't compliment her and people

don't like spending time with her. (Maybe except for Lucas and Dustin who act like they have never seen a girl before.)

"It's okay. You don't have to apologize." And Max means it, she doesn't want Eleven to feel sorry. Of course, Max felt a bit bad when Eleven ignored her at first but she made it up to her last night. Just being in Eleven's presence was like a gift for Max, a gift which she would never take for granted. "I'm glad you enjoyed your time with me." She takes a deep breath before continuing, as if she is getting ready to go on a quest. "If you would like, we could do it again sometime."

A sparkle appears in Eleven's eyes and she smiles. Her smile is pretty and it is a shame that she doesn't smile as much as she should. The world deserves to see more of this beautiful view, at least this is what Max thinks. She might be a bit biased though. "You are a really nice person, Maxine." This is the first time someone has called her Maxine since she was ten and she is startled by how beautiful it sounds coming from Eleven. "I like you." Eleven doesn't realize the meaning her words might convey until it is too late and Max stops walking, looking at Eleven's brown eyes for almost a full minute. "As a person," Eleven tries to say but her sentence is barely audible through her stutters. She feels embarrassed, mostly because what she said isn't exactly wrong or misunderstood on Max's side.

Instead of scowling, Max smiles and tilts her head. "I like you too Jane." She fakes a cough. "As a person." Eleven laughs. She feels those familiar worms crawling inside her stomach but this time, they almost feel like... butterflies. Eleven somehow knows that they have wings and are ready to fly. Max looks down on the ground because she wants to say something more. She wants to talk about how gorgeous Eleven actually is and how she is so much stronger than she looks and wow, Max just really adores her and she doesn't even know when that happened. They walk in silence until they have reached Hopper's house.

"Thank you once more," Eleven says. The butterflies inside her stomach are slowly climbing up to her lungs and she can hardly breathe.

"It's okay. I enjoyed it too," Max replies. Her hands are itching to hold

Eleven's hand once more and her lips are twitching with the need to kiss her. (She doesn't even realize that she wants to kiss Eleven but suddenly her lips look too chapped like she needs someone to make them wet. And they are too pink that it would be a shame not to kiss them.)

"Max," Eleven suddenly exclaims.

"Jane."

Before they know it, they are inching closer to each other and faster than they can comprehend, their lips touch. It feels better than Max could ever imagine. Eleven's lips are soft and warm and even though she isn't a believer, she almost hears angels sing. Eleven, on the other hand, is utterly shocked at how different her lips feel than Mike's. She feels warm and the butterflies start flying in a sky full of love. Max's lips are so full and soft that Eleven doesn't want to part. When she learned what love meant, she was scared that she would never understand the meaning it had but now she does. Her heart is on fire and when Max pulls her even closer, she smiles. Max feels like she is floating on clouds and she subtly pinches herself to wake up in case this was a dream. But this is not a dream. Max and Eleven are kissing and somehow, both girls feel at ease.

When they finally separate from each other, they are breathless but smiling and their cheeks are red as strawberries. "I should probably go," Eleven stutters. Max lets out a chuckle. "I'll... See you around?" There is a hint of question and hope in her voice which doesn't go unnoticed by Max.

"Sure you will," Max grins. "And Jane?" Calling her Jane feels less weird now because everyone is calling her El and Max wants to show that she is different. Eleven raises her eyebrows. "Maybe we will never be ordinary girls and maybe it is okay."

Eleven smiles because she has definitely realized that Max is not ordinary either. "Maybe it is okay," she whispers before smiling once more and disappearing into the house.

The smile on Max's face doesn't disappear until the next day.